

# Fall Allergies Are Nothing to Sneeze At For Seniors

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While Fall allergies aren't fun for anyone, they place an extra burden on older adults, many of whom live with preexisting medical conditions that can be complicated by allergy symptoms such as congestion or a sore throat. According to the [Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America](#), it is estimated that approximately 50 million people nationwide are affected by nasal allergies. Allergies pose an even higher threat for seniors who may experience asthmatic complications and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

Here in the Buffalo area, ragweed and turning leaves can bring on congestion, fatigue and feverish aches or chills as Fall starts to kick in. As a Registered Nurse Care and Care Coordinator with [VNSNY CHOICE Health Plans](#), my colleagues and I work hard to help our elderly clients minimize discomfort and potential complications from autumn allergies. Here are a few reminders that could be especially helpful for vulnerable seniors and their family caregivers as the leaves begin to fall and the “ah-choos” start to take their toll:

**Leave Allergens at the Door:** Outside pollen and other allergens are easily tracked into to your home on your skin, hair, clothes and pets. As soon as you come inside after being out in the autumn air, make sure to thoroughly wash your hands and face and wipe off shoes and sweaters to prevent allergens from lingering and building up on pillows and around your home.

**Pay Attention to Pollen Levels:** Be aware of local pollen counts and try to stay indoors when pollen levels are high. Local TV and radio stations often provide updates when the numbers go up. If you're travelling, plan ahead by checking pollen levels in any location you may be visiting.

**Dust Off that Dehumidifier:** Humid environments are a breeding ground for dust mites and molds. Deep Fall can bring a range of respiratory irritants into the air. Keep air clean, cool and dry—and use a dehumidifier to keep indoor allergy symptoms to a minimum. Fall is a good time to change air conditioner and furnace air filters as well.

**Check-in for a Check-up:** Many people have unique allergic reactions to environmental irritants like smoke, smog and dry air. Allergens and pollutants can affect us differently as we age. If you do get Fall sneezes and sniffles, be mindful of lingering symptoms like a runny nose, sore throat or persistent cough. Make sure to check with a health professional if you experience pronounced respiratory changes, especially during allergy season. Some common antihistamines are known to cause side effects dangerous to seniors, such as elevated blood pressure, dizziness and fatigue. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about which over-the-counter or prescription drug options are best for you, and keep in mind that you may need a personal treatment plan tailored to your needs.

To learn more about health plans that help elder New Yorkers live more comfortably, safely, and independently in their own homes, visit [www.VNSNYCHOICE.org](http://www.VNSNYCHOICE.org) or call 1-855-AT CHOICE (1-855-282-4642).